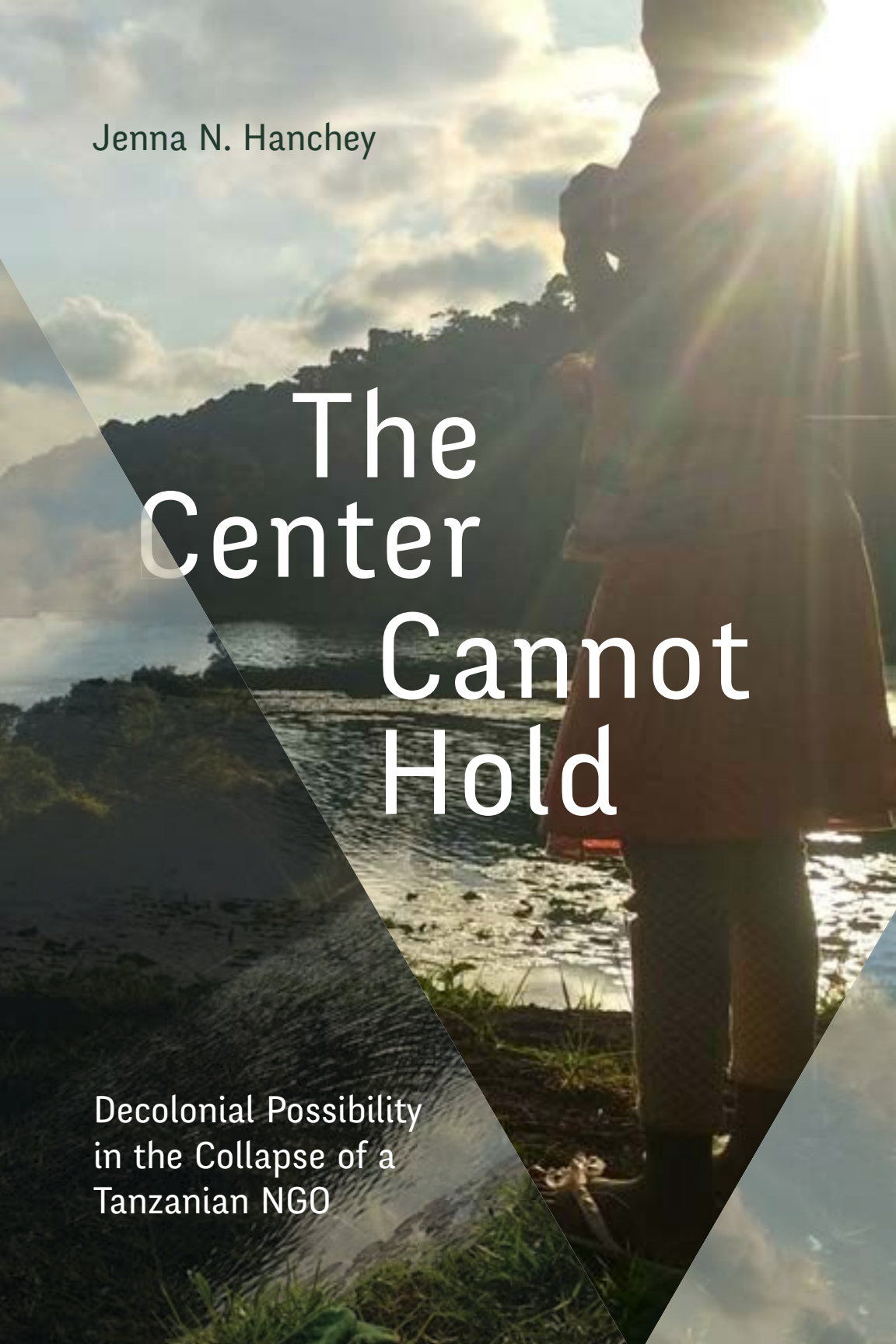

Jenna N. Hanchey

The Center Cannot Hold

Decolonial Possibility in the Collapse of a Tanzanian NGO

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To the people of the Little Community
and everyone who has been forced to act
around structures and push through cracks
in order to survive and thrive

In memory of Joseph Chow

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Introduction
The Center Cannot Hold

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
—W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," quoted by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*

Falling Apart

I spent the longest hours of my life sitting by a dying fire in a stranger's kitchen, watching as the coals slowly dimmed, leaving me alone in the dark. Hours passed as I sat, invisible, waiting. Waiting for the authorities to come, waiting for the past to undo itself, waiting to wake up from what had to be a dream. I was caught in a loop, repeating, "It's all my fault. It's all my fault," over and over and over again, rocking back and forth to accompany the rhythm of the words, replaying his fall like a scene from a film, over and over and over again. My phone was dead, my friend was dead, and I was falling apart.

I spent 2007–9 teaching Ordinary Level (O-Level) physics and mathematics in a rural government school in the Hagati Valley of the Ruvuma Region in the United Republic of Tanzania.[1] My friend Joe had come to visit, using some of

his final time in-country as a Peace Corps volunteer to see beautiful sights before returning to the United States. I happened to live within hiking distance of Lake Nyasa, as well as what was colloquially rumored to be the second largest rock in East Africa, Mbuji. I had climbed it three times before. How had the danger not sunk in?

That night in 2009, falling apart felt like the end of the world. It has taken over a decade—multiple trips back and forth between Tanzania and the United States, and the writing of this book—for me to understand that it was the end of *a* world, of the ways I had been knowing the world.[2] And that from the end of a world can emerge something different. And that different worlds hold the potential to become more just. Better.

As I later reflected in field notes, I felt like I was falling apart because of the way my sense of self was dependent on African objectification: "Joe's death had shattered my volunteer image of Tanzania—as a time-out from 'real' life . . . a dreamland, a place where you make things happen, but nothing happens to you. Because if it did, then it would not be the fantasy that you have created. It would be something tangible, something important, something agentic." The way Westerners understand ourselves is dependent, at least in part, on *not* recognizing, listening to, and learning from Africans.[3] We create and re-create ourselves through fantasies of Africa based on logics of whiteness and coloniality that disavow African agency and allow us to fashion ourselves saviors. We build on these notions of self to create nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), to offer aid. What, then, happens to Western selves and organizations when their (neo)colonial foundation is shaken? Or even when it cracks, breaks, falls apart?

Almost a decade after Joe's death, I assisted the North American managers of the Little Community, an NGO in the Mikoda village area where I had spent years doing ethnographic fieldwork,[4] in plotting what they termed "a coup" to overthrow the (neo)colonial white administrator of the organization. Sarah and Tim had long worked with the Tanzanian steering committee of the NGO, the Viongozi Wa Shirika, to run the organization in a way that moved toward a future of complete Tanzanian leadership. But after a decade of continual pushback from the British colonist who sat as chairman of the board, Mr. Giles, the NGO staff could no longer hold the organization together under the increasing tensions between their desired future and the neocolonial structures he enforced. And the Little Community fell apart.

In both of these cases, as things fell apart I began to understand exactly how little of these structures of self and organization had been solid in the first place. It took falling apart to recognize the flows of transformation that had been acting within and on us the whole time. At the Little Community, the

Viongozi Wa Shirika, with Sarah and Tim, had been slowly infiltrating the hierarchy and procedures emplaced by Mr. Giles, drops of water that had found holes in the solid order of the organization. The drops expanded those holes, slowly increasing in force to become streams, pushing, wearing away, until they cracked the walls. I, like Mr. Giles and other Westerners, had attempted to impose solidity by refusing to see myself as anything but coherent. In doing so I had missed the channels and disruptions that impacted my understanding of myself, as well as the opportunities they offered for transformation. Rather than reinforcing collapsing structures in vain, what happens if we follow the rivulets out of the ruins?

Situating the Study

The Center Cannot Hold argues that processes of ruination and collapse hold decolonial potential. I focus on two particular "centers" often assumed to be worth maintaining: first, the subjective coherence of Western volunteers and researchers, not least myself; and second, the operational structure of an internationally funded NGO in rural Tanzania. I argue that allowing such structures to fall apart, even when it may seem to bring nothing but destruction, is necessary to build decolonial futures. Part I focuses on Western subjectivities, building toward a theoretical argument for *haunted reflexivity*. Tired of seeing academics list identity categories (e.g., white, Western, woman) and then act as if the labor of reflexivity were complete,[5] I have developed the concept of haunted reflexivity, which stages how privileged subjects, who are trained not to see the violence of coloniality that we participate in and uphold every day, come to critical awareness through repeated encounters with our own complicity. Only by facing the ghosts of (neo)colonialism and our own hand in their creation, over and over again, can Western subjects transform into decolonial coconspirators. But we can never fully recognize all the ways that we have participated in or support (neo)colonial systems. Thus, haunted reflexivity is an unending process of (neo)colonial haunting, one that will never be finalized or complete.

Part II then shifts to the Little Community as an organization, using theories of liquid organizing and epistemological injustice to highlight what I term *liquid agency*. I define liquid agency as the ability to delink from and articulate opposition to the epistemologies of coloniality through emergent and contingent (re)actions based in relational and contextual connections. Liquid agency both precipitates and demonstrates the potential of the collapse of the NGO. I examine how the falling apart of the organizational structure produces the

possibility for decolonial action. Moving around, against, and through solid structures, liquid agency opens paths to futures once deemed impossible. I conclude by describing how the creation of impossible futures depends on *decolonial dreamwork*. If the potential for decolonial futures arises when the center cannot hold, when things fall apart, then decolonial dreamwork is the labor required to imagine such futures and imbue them with the power to "draw us towards them, to command us to make them flesh."[6] Dreaming is important to this labor, as coloniality often circumscribes what is "possible" and "impossible" according to white, Western norms as well as neoliberal capitalist demands. By daring to dream outside these bounds, new worlds may be created: the impossible is turned into the possible.

This book draws together rhetoric, fugitive anthropology, critical development studies, and Women of Color feminisms to investigate how North American donors, volunteers, and workers in a Tanzanian NGO engage in communication with and about Tanzanian counterparts and aid recipients in ways that are both decolonial and neocolonial, and how the NGO acts as the locus of these contradictory approaches. At the same time, I investigate how US subjects who wish to engage critically with aid work and processes of development also embody a locus of (de)colonial contradiction, one that operates at the heart of subjectivity itself. In doing so, I thus connect the localized and tangible rhetorics used within aid work to those more disperse rhetorics of power and ideology used to sustain our understandings of ourselves.

I draw from these four particular fields of study for important reasons. The decolonial politics of my study resonate with critical development studies, which has long recognized that aid is not an unquestioned good and often acts to support neocolonial politics and imperialistic financial relations.[7] In large part, the West caused the exigencies seen as requiring developmental aid and is only in the position to "fix" such problems because of centuries spent stealing resources, destabilizing governmental forms, and colonizing and enslaving people.[8] Aid to Africa, in particular, traffics in representations of the continent that figure African circumstances as abject and African people as unable to act on their own behalf, thus requiring Western intervention.[9] These portrayals are also attached to material consequences, as the West derives financial gain from undermining African agency.[10]

Yet development scholars are often more focused on the big picture of global development than the details of lived experience. Erin Beck suggests that "while social scientists are generally interested in the fine-grained nature of people's lives, meanings, and motivations, this has not always been the case when it comes to those involved in NGOs or development projects."[11] To

understand how people negotiate development politics in their particular contexts and lives, I couple the ideological critiques of critical development studies with the intimate insights of anthropological work. Anthropology points to the complexities of aid work in situated communities and how local actors play a fundamental role in the actualization of development plans. Notably, anthropology examines how Africans speak back to Western initiatives and have done so since the beginning of the colonial era, acting to reconfigure what development looks like.[12]

Yet, while critical and decolonial anthropologists have struggled for decades to reconcile contemporary anthropology with the discipline's colonial history, less attention has been paid to how issues of race and racialization are bound up with coloniality.[13] In order to examine how North American aid workers are caught up in logics of whiteness and patriarchy, as well as coloniality in Tanzania, I draw from the work of Women of Color feminists, who help us to think not only about how gender is imbricated in race and racialization but also how subjects themselves are the products of political relations.[14] As such, subjects become a locus of politics, carrying what would normally be considered the politics of the field around in their subjective experience and embodied presence. The home and the field, as with bodies and subjectivities, cannot be disentangled.[15] I carry the reverberations of my experiences with me wherever I go in ways that affect my understanding of and relations with people and places.

Rhetoric, then, ties all of these literatures together through a focus on how persuasive discourse mediates the divide between the macrolevel of ideological power structures and the microlevel of subjective statements and actions, as well as the divide between theoretical argument and subjective embodiment often upheld by disciplinary rifts. If "anthropology has downplayed . . . the importance of theories of experience for understanding subjectivity,"[16] it is only responding in kind, as "crucial ethnographic and cross-cultural studies have even more rarely been taken up by philosophers, literary critics, feminist scholars, and other theorists writing about subjectivity."[17] Rhetoric can help to bridge this divide, bringing theories of subjectivity and embodied experiences into conversation to shed light on the suasive (dis)connections that support, in particular, US subjects' understandings of themselves as aid workers in relation to Tanzanians.

Rhetoric offers a means of tying the hyperlocal analyses of anthropology to global flows of racial and colonial power.[18] Particularly, I examine the ways that rampant neocolonial ideologies of white saviorism and North American exceptionalism are reconstructed, shifted, and challenged in the contact zone of a Western-funded but Tanzanian-implemented NGO.[19] And, perhaps more

importantly, I am interested in what happens when an NGO becomes the center of that contact zone, when it attempts to hold together conflicting ideologies about aid and development—what happens when that center cannot hold and things fall apart.

Productive Ruination

When things break—whether they shatter immediately, scattering fragments that can never be reassembled into the shape they once were, or slowly dilapidate over time, losing chips, mechanisms, and boulders to corrosive forces—something is produced as ruination advances. Ann Laura Stoler defines *ruination* as "an active, ongoing process that allocates imperial debris differentially."[20] She draws from Derek Walcott's figuring of colonialism as "the 'rot' that remains" to examine how colonialism continues to act in dark corners and unexpected places, "eating away [at] bodies, environment, and possibilities,"[21] actively ruining lives of the colonized long after direct colonization has ended. Here I want to examine ruination in a slightly different manner. Can ruination emerge from not only the enduring forces of the colonizer but also the enduring resistance of the colonized? What might it look like to figure some processes of ruination as productive of possibilities for decolonization and justice?

The Center Cannot Hold examines how ruination may also affect structures emplaced by coloniality, as tensions between the colonial and decolonial act to tear them apart. Colonialism as rot affects not only the colonized but also the colonizer, albeit differentially. It poisons senses of ethics and politics, it leaves paternalism or hate where there should be care, it predicates development on domination.[22] If we are "to sharpen our senses and sense of how to track the tangibilities of empire as effective histories of the present,"[23] we should look to the ruination of neocolonial structures as well, and how their falling apart produces spaces out of which more just relations can emerge. Throughout the book I trace two processes of productive ruination: the dissolution of the NGO, unable to handle the contradictions between Tanzanian leadership and paternalistic relations; and the unstable subjectivity of Western volunteers—and myself as a researcher—unable to hold the contradictions between white savior and decolonial coconspirator, watching over and over as the self each of us thought we were continually falls apart. Tracing the concepts of haunted reflexivity and liquid agency through these processes, I argue that what waits on the other side of ruination is the possibility of decolonial justice.

Nongovernmental organizations are tenuous creatures, so often fighting for their own survival that they forget survival is not supposed to be the point.[24]

As Peace Corps volunteers we were often told that our mission was to work ourselves out of a job, but few development organizations can be said to substantively demonstrate this mission. Instead, Western-led international NGOs spend more of their time and energy catering to donors in whatever ways are necessary to secure funding than they do making sure that their services are what the people receiving them want, let alone providing services that guarantee lasting structural change.[25] In such NGOs, the emergent mission becomes ensuring financial stability rather than ensuring social justice. Erin Beck identifies this and similar tensions as generalizable throughout the NGO world, describing them as conflicts between developmental goals and organizational goals that arise from Westerners' "simplified views of the other."[26] It only makes sense, if they are generalizable to the structure of international NGOs, that sometimes these tensions must pull the entire organizational structure apart.

The Little Community grew into itself over the course of a decade, transitioning from a one-dormitory orphanage into a thriving mini-community containing a preschool, kindergarten, sewing school, medical clinic, and farm in addition to six homes where children lived. In these homes the children lived as families, with housemothers or -fathers from their tribe, and had regular contact with extended family or guardians in the nearby villages. Rather than providing a path to foster care or adoption, the Little Community worked to make sure that the young people would have a place in their home village when they reached a point where either their guardians were able to take them home to care for them or they were able to care for themselves. Projects stretched beyond the outskirts of Little Community as well, as its employees ran a Home-Based Care initiative for HIV/AIDS patients, planned events with local schools at the NGO's community hall in the nearby village center, and met with government officials to keep everything running smoothly and in line with community desires.

Over the past few years, however, the Little Community I knew has been slowly disintegrating. Gone are more than half of the employees that were there during my stay; after Sarah and Tim resigned, Mr. Giles took over the finances and slashed the budget, downsizing the staff considerably. Although he promoted a Tanzanian staff member to the position of manager, Mr. Giles retained control of all money, as well as hiring and firing decisions. Many women decided to leave the NGO to go back to school, studying to be hospitality managers. Sarah and Tim's plan to "stage a coup" did not come to fruition, but they partnered with two staff members, Musa and Faraji, to together begin a new NGO.

What is produced when an NGO falls apart, undergoes ruination, begins to rot, and particularly an NGO that was created by a British colonist whose

colonial sensibilities were encased in the structuring logics that acted to filter interactions, relations, and projects? As I have suggested elsewhere, decolonizing aid work may require destroying its organizations.[27] In this case, it is in the ruins of the NGO that we may find the potential for an organization premised on delinking from coloniality, starting not from scratch but from the ruins that rot has left behind, building from both the desire for decoloniality and the negation of neocolonial domination.

This book describes both the US subject and the NGO as the epicenter of tensions and contradictions that each eventually is unable to continue to hold in place. I am not exempt from such contradictions as a white, US researcher.[28] The first part of the book thus culminates in my own subjective (de)colonial contradictions, with my own falling apart. In this book's titular twin, professor of law and psychoanalyst Elyn Saks writes of her struggles with schizophrenia. What she describes as the "disorganization" of schizophrenia is not unique to the disorder. The coherence of any subject is a fiction, a fantasy used to cover our structural inability to be whole and complete.[29] Though to a lesser degree than those dealing with schizophrenia, all subjects must continually labor to keep their subjective center together and keep things from falling apart. I will discuss this view of subjectivity further in chapters 2 and 3. Saks describes her personal experiences with the disorganization of losing her center in the following manner:

> Consciousness gradually loses it coherence. One's center gives way. The center cannot hold. The "me" becomes a haze, and the solid center from which one experiences reality breaks up like a bad radio signal. There is no longer a sturdy vantage point from which to look out, take things in, assess what's happening. No core holds things together, providing the lens through which to see the world, to make judgments and comprehend risk. Random moments of time follow one another. Sights, sounds, thoughts, and feelings don't go together. No organizing principle takes successive moments of time and puts them together in a coherent way from which sense can be made. And it's all taking place in slow motion.[30]

If all subjects do not experience such moments of intense destabilization, it is only because they are able to hold tightly to the organizing principles that social and cultural formations provide for them; but to do so, for any subject, is a constant form of labor because subjective consistency is a fantasy that can fall apart at any time. Coherence is a fiction—not only that, but an ideological fiction. All organizing principles, all means to solidify subjective coherence—however fictional and fleeting—are necessarily political. The ways that we or-

ganize reality are products of and productive of power. And for contemporary colonizers, in particular, it can be necessary for the center to dissolve in order to reframe our subjective realities in decolonial ways. As I will discuss in chapter 3, when subjects encounter parts of their own political structuring that have been foreclosed from conscious thought, falling apart is necessary to a reflexivity that aims toward justice.[31] Similarly, in chapter 6, I look to how the organization itself needs to dissolve for new organizing logics to take hold. Sometimes it is from the collapse of the center that decoloniality may emerge.

The Decolonial Potential of Liquidity

I contend that shattering not only fragments subjects and organizations but also offers a means to rebuild them in ways that epistemologically and ontologically break from coloniality. As such, my research at the Little Community was premised on a decolonial politics. I draw from this body of work, rather than alternative approaches, because decolonial theory necessarily moves us beyond critiques of neocolonialism into dismantling structures and recognizing alternative epistemologies. Yet as my research simultaneously examines what Western rhetorics and US subjective understandings produce in the contact zone of the NGO, I couple decolonial goals with critique.

Rather than maintain a typical anthropological focus on "the other,"[32] I turn the lens of critique onto North American subjects—though maintaining a relational understanding that attempts to avoid recentering domination—in order to search for destabilizing shifts that provide opportunities to decolonize NGO relations.[33] Ultimately I find that attempts from within to decolonize the NGO—or US subjectivities—can never be enough; the structures of the Western subject and international organization are so strongly moored in neocolonialism that it takes a shattering of the center to provide substantive decolonial transformation.

Darrel Wanzer defines coloniality as "a constitutive feature of Western modernity that structures exclusionary modes of power, knowledge, and being—it is the dark underside of modernity, which influences both first and third world people."[34] What Walter Mignolo terms "modernity/coloniality" undergirds the modern world system, differentially distributing ontologies and epistemologies in ways that secure Western hegemony. Decolonial theory then seeks to delink from modernity/coloniality by opening space for alternative rationalities and epistemic freedom, as well as ontological space for being human outside the delimitations of Man.[35]

I use the term *coloniality* throughout this work to refer to contemporary configurations of power, with neocolonialism and epistemic injustice being two of the primary forms coloniality takes within the Little Community and its relations. *Colonialism*, then, refers to the historical system of occupation, control, and subjugation that still has ramifications within contemporary coloniality. I will sometimes use the combination *(neo)colonial* to denote when relations demonstrate aspects of both colonialism and neocolonialism at the same time, such as settlements on land that reflect colonial logics of occupation simultaneous to neocolonial logics of use. Finally, I use *postcolonial* as a temporal marker to denote the shift from direct colonialism to the more disperse coloniality.

This book particularly looks to the ways that coloniality has led to African subjective and epistemological erasure and how the collapse of Western subjectivities and NGO structures based in such erasures can make way for decolonial possibility and epistemic justice.[36] Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that epistemic freedom forms the basis from which political and economic freedom can emerge in contemporary Africa. *The Center Cannot Hold* first examines Western subjectivities and how they uphold neocolonial relations, before turning to the way such unreflexive subjectivities then cause epistemological clashes with Tanzanian staff in the Little Community. As Ramón Grosfoguel asserts, "Decolonization of knowledge would require to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking *from* and *with* subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies."[37] Part II of the book examines fluid epistemologies and liquid organizing practices that emerge from Tanzanian epistemologies and relations to marginalization, asking how taking such epistemologies and organizing seriously might transform the Little Community and other NGO contexts. This does not require an absolute abandonment of Western logics and rationalities, but rather an abandonment of their dominance or universality. Decolonial theory thus aims toward what Mignolo calls "a world in which many worlds can coexist," or what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o refers to as a "globalectic" view, where "any point is equally a center."[38]

Engaging with African epistemologies under conditions of coloniality is not as simple as it sounds, however. Joëlle Cruz and Chigozirim Utah Sodeke demonstrate this in regard to liquidity in particular. As African organizational scholars trained in the Western academy who returned to engage in fieldwork in Liberia and Nigeria, they found that their training made it difficult or even impossible to understand African means and epistemologies of organizing. As they write, "we were not prepared for the realities of researching organizing in

motion due to our training that predisposed us to immobility."[39] They reflect over the ways that their Western training primed them to see "organizations" and "organizing" through a specific lens, one that was neither constructed for nor reflective of many African contexts.

Cruz and Sodeke put forth a theoretical lens capable of recognizing and understanding organizing as liquid, drawing from African epistemologies and contexts of marginality. They define liquid organizing as "so intertwined with political, economic, and cultural contexts at the margins . . . that it shape-shifts and moves like a liquid." Liquid organizing emerges from African epistemologies at the same time as it is forced on marginalized subjects by contexts of precarity. That is, Cruz and Sodeke note that "liquid organizing is normative in many non-Western contexts and anchored in alternative cultural logics," and yet, simultaneously, "globalization and neoliberalism push disenfranchised actors further into liquidity and in turn, actors use liquidity to circumvent survival threats and operate outside the realm of official actors."[40] Liquidity is thus both a means of surviving within economic disenfranchisement and global marginalization and of resisting their logics.

In part, liquidity breaks from the logics of coloniality by centering the importance of collectives and relations to the process of organizing. Whereas coloniality rests on assumptions of the liberal autonomous subject,[41] the ability to engage in liquid action depends on intimate relational networks. Elsewhere Cruz describes how African feminist organizing is "trust-based" and "integrated" into the community.[42] Similarly, liquid organizing only functions because of its "embeddedness . . . in context and local communities."[43] As fluid epistemologies reorient thinking and relationality, centering liquidity is one means of challenging the epistemic injustice that erases African ways of knowing.[44] This book engages in fluid epistemologies in a double sense: in the process of research itself, as an orientation to (inter)disciplinarity; and in the context of the Little Community, examining how liquid organizing and fluid epistemologies run into and work around the structures emplaced by coloniality. I detail both senses below.

Interdisciplinary Fluidity

Fluid thinking uses interdisciplinarity to level a critique of mainstream disciplinary structures from within. Rather than directly challenging disciplinary structures, fluid epistemologies channel disparate streams and flows, moving in and through solid disciplinary structures, often without their knowledge. Fluid epistemologies spill forth from disciplinary containers.[45] If decolonial

work depends on undisciplining our thinking,[46] then a particularly salient undisciplining for decolonial work within the Little Community occurs at the intersection of rhetoric and anthropology. If anthropology is, on the one hand, obsessed with the exotic international other, and rhetoric is, on the other hand, girdled by the nation-state in its formulations of public and civic life, the meeting of the two produces a theoretical space where the NGO's messy intercultural relations and organizational strategies may be interrogated and reimagined in decolonial ways.[47] The fluidity of this work flows in ways that draws anthropology deeper into Western subjects' implication in interculturality and pushes rhetoric toward communal life as a global network.[48] Specifically, this book uses interdisciplinarity to stage an underground revolt against disciplinary limitations, refigure the subjective assumptions of Man, and organize through means different from those of typical activist scholarship.

The Center Cannot Hold will not resemble a typical anthropological or rhetorical text. As Aisha Beliso-De Jesús and Jemima Pierre state, "Mainstream anthropology continues to steer clear of analysis that centers race and processes of racialization," in addition to centering "the fetishization of a particular kind of ethnographic localization . . . that tends to eschew broader structures of power."[49] Rhetoric can be said to have an opposing problem. Most critical rhetoricians locate their studies of coloniality, racialization, and gender within the construction and circulation of mediated discourse. This work critically examines representations of Africa and Africans, teases out the nuances of white saviorism and American exceptionalism, and investigates intersectional complexities.[50] Yet rhetoric is rarely connected to lived experience in the field.[51] Although rhetoricians have long assumed that hegemonic representations of and expectations regarding race, gender, and culture impact lived experience, they have only recently begun using fieldwork to investigate the relationship between mediated publicity and embodied interaction.[52] Many still do so, however, from a perspective that centers the nation-state, and particularly the United States, through citizenship logics of inclusion.[53] This book winds around such expectations, centering Western-Tanzanian intercultural relations on a global stage without reference to the state and eschewing logics of inclusion for the decolonial agency that arises from liquid maneuvers around and through such solid-seeming structures. Yet if "development interventions are . . . interactive processes in which multiple dispositions, interests, and meanings conflict, interlock, and interpenetrate, and in which accommodation, reinterpretation, struggle, and adjustment are ongoing,"[54] then rhetorical scholarship still has something integral to offer in understanding how the politics of NGOs are negotiated on the ground, as well as the implications for global relations of

power. But it must use alternative epistemologies to do so. As Tiara Na'puti argues, "Breaking from [its] history offers ways for Rhetorical Studies to become entirely different—constituted through non-Western perspectives and ways of knowing and being."[55]

Part of breaking from this history involves questioning the assumed white, masculine, Western liberal subject in which both anthropology and rhetoric are grounded. Maya Berry, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada "refuse the emblematic racially privileged male anthropologist" in a foreign land who grounds epistemologies of fieldwork in anthropology—even anthropology that claims activist goals.[56] Similarly, I have elsewhere written that when rhetorical scholars "absent bodies from discussions of theory, we implicitly ground our theories in somatic norms and tacitly accept their conditions—whiteness and coloniality—which circumscribe who the theories represent."[57] That is, even researchers who take an activist stance of partnering with participants to challenge dominant social structures often end up reifying the very racial, neocolonial, and heteropatriarchal dynamics they set out to critique. By examining how North American participants in intercultural communicative practices (re)construct racial, neocolonial, and gendered hegemonies derived from North American media and culture within a Tanzanian context, I am implicated as a researcher within the very rhetorics I analyze. Throughout *The Center Cannot Hold* I attempt to embrace my own complicity and interrogate what it means for theory and praxis. The concept of haunted reflexivity emerges from my struggle as a researcher to substantively theorize and put into practice what it means to do decolonial research as a colonizer, one whose very subjective bones are forged out of violence against others.

Even activist scholars often do not account for the violence out of which our subjectivities emerge, upholding instead "an implicit standard of whiteness and coloniality in our theorizing by starting from what Sylvia Wynter terms 'Man.'"[58] For one, the people that activist researchers are presumed to study are those who exist on the underside of modernity and do not hold any sort of hegemonic leverage, and the researcher is assumed to be in a position of relative dominance.[59] In this manner, activist research tends to mimic the politics of care that Miriam Ticktin describes, in which Western responsibility for the "wretched of the earth" places othered subjects outside context, obscures histories that placed them in marginalized positions, and produces only certain (raced, gendered, and sexualized) bodies as worth care.[60] At the same time, activist research also reinscribes the researcher as white savior.[61]

Thinking from a perspective that centers liquidity would make activism more dispersive, and also make the researcher who partners with a community

an intimate part of the relational context required for emergent actions. Unlike typical activist research, there is no distinct and clear enemy to organize against. Rather, the struggle against structures of power in the postcolonial context is an ambivalent one. Godfried Asante describes ambivalence for queer Ghanaian subjects as a means of both engaging in and simultaneously undermining structures of power in ways that open possibilities for survival for marginalized subjects.[62] In the Little Community, the Tanzanian staff often must subvert Western donor desires without directly challenging them. As Damas put it, "We can't say we refuse, because we need the money." The Viongozi Wa Shirika had to find creative ways to resist in order to survive. As a researcher, then, I also have to think fluidly while recognizing that I am just as implicated within structures of whiteness and coloniality as the Western donors I would help the NGO leadership maneuver in different directions.

In the first draft of this manuscript, I tried to use the concept of fugitivity rather than fluidity to capture the resistance of Tanzanian NGO workers to neocolonial relations. This may not seem pertinent to the final work at first glance, but it reveals some of the more insidious ways that coloniality can affect research—even research that is explicitly attuned toward its implications. Through reviewer feedback and conversations with African friends and colleagues, I began to realize that though liquidity is related to fugitivity,[63] it does not figure quite the same relation to context. And to assume that fugitivity could be exported from diasporic theorizations into an African context is, in part, Western-centric.[64] Fugitivity emerges from the particular embedded histories of the African diaspora, drawing the primary concept of "flight" from the need to escape totalizing systems such as slavery and anti-Blackness and their inextricability from contemporary US life. For instance, fugitivity lays bare how diasporic subjects are encoded through lenses of criminality and madness when resisting the status quo.[65] But the neocolonial and racial formation of Tanzania is not nearly so totalizing as to make flight the only, or best, option for challenging systems of domination in-country. Certainly, NGOs in Africa participate in global contexts of neocolonialism.[66] And anti-Blackness still affects African subjects.[67] But in the postcolonial space of Tanzania, Indigenous relational structures, socialism and the fallout of villagization, and policies of non-racialism are just as formative to the contemporary context—if not more so—as are global structures of anti-Blackness and coloniality.

That is, the Little Community is situated within a historical context in which anti-Blackness and coloniality have important effects, but are not sedimented into the national structure in the way that they are in Western postslavery contexts. Ronald Aminzade describes how Tanzanian national development

was based in "a common history of oppression by foreigners" rather than the ethnocentric nationalisms often seen in the West.[68] Tensions arose between desires for international legitimacy within the global economy and the ideological integrity of socialist principles within the nation. Tanzania's first president, Julius Nyerere, thus ingrained a focus on international class relations that sometimes obscured the importance of race in national and international dynamics. For instance, he saw "class struggle [as] less between the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat, than between the poor of the South and the rich of the North," leading to an inability to "accept that South Africans could have an exploitative relation with other African countries," even white South Africans.[69] Nyerere instead instituted policies of "non-racialism" in Tanzanian governance that failed to recognize whiteness and/or anti-Blackness as structuring forces.[70] After he stepped down as president in 1985, forthcoming leaders acceded to international pressures for neoliberal economic restructuring.[71] Tensions and contradictions between Tanzania's socialist history and the neoliberal present continue to have significant ramifications today. In short, the contemporary Tanzanian context emerges from struggles between socialism and capitalism, different ways of responding to neocolonialism after independence, and the racial histories of the nation that make it a context where "fugitivity" does not readily apply. Liquid maneuvers in and through tensions and contradictions better fit Tanzania's particular postcolonial context.

I still find the "fugitive anthropology" of Berry and colleagues to be useful to understanding a fluid approach to (inter)disciplinarity. They define it as "an anthropology that, grounded in black feminist analysis and praxis inspired by Indigenous decolonial thinking, centers an embodied feminist analysis while working within the contested space of the academy." Integrating fieldwork with issues of gender and sexuality, racialization, and coloniality, fugitive anthropology "critically examine[s] how dominant strands of activist anthropology replicate that which they critique, by silencing the racialized, gendered researcher's embodied experience or by inscribing it in new colonial narratives."[72] Like fugitive anthropology, interdisciplinary fluidity offers a means to decenter white, Western, masculine assumptions within normalized disciplinary frameworks of theory and praxis.

This study thus attempts to delink from the imperialist nostalgia that still insidiously acts to center even activist research back in coloniality.[73] I labor throughout this work to question my own role as a researcher, and to break through the white savior fantasies that hold my own fiction of subjective coherence in place, in order to see what decolonial potential arises from the act of falling apart. In part, "interdisciplinarity [is] the ideal orientation toward

decoloniality,"[74] because flowing in and through walls weakens them, leaving channels and fissures, perhaps even causing collapse. At the same time, "interdisciplinarity is by no means an abandoning of one's discipline,"[75] but rather an opening of its constrained potential. I reach for the decolonial possibilities that emerge from the cracks as structures collapse, creating what Faye Harrison terms a "coalition of knowledges" that allows for the production of innovative theoretical claims and methodological approaches. Decolonial futures may just depend on interdisciplinary thought.[76]

Liquid Agency in the Little Community

The Center Cannot Hold also examines how NGO workers in the Little Community display what I term liquid agency—that is, the agentic potential that emerges from alternative epistemologies disavowed under coloniality. It describes how the members of Viongozi Wa Shirika and other Tanzanian staff are able to work from within a neocolonial organization to destabilize and move around structures emplaced by coloniality, engendering alternative developmental paths and futures. When liquid flows enter solid structures, sooner or later they wear the structures away and things collapse. As the flows break through and the organization falls apart, opportunities to enact decoloniality emerge.

Even prior to the organization's collapse, the Tanzanian staff centered fluid epistemologies that allowed for liquid action and redirection depending on emergent conditions. When the NGO first began, it started out purely as an orphanage: one house on a hillside above a forest, where a number of children lived with a housemother. But everyone knew that orphaned children were a symptom of a larger problem: the devastating result of HIV/AIDS' sweep across the community. At one point, a survey commissioned by the Little Community found a 35 percent rate of positivity in the surrounding villages. The Little Community staff thus labored to emplace medical care for HIV-positive villagers: access to antiretroviral medications, a CD4 machine to track disease progression, and a Home-Based Care program to check in on those too ill to leave their houses. Eventually the tide of death began to ebb as access to medication and care enabled community survival.

At this point other problems began to emerge. Once emergency medicine for survival was secured, the need for more comprehensive day-to-day health care was clear. Once vulnerable children had guardianship, they now needed education. That required school uniforms. And what if some children failed out of school? Nongovernmental organization workers saw an emergent opportunity to connect two interrelated needs: to train those unable to continue

in traditional schooling how to sew so that they would be able to supply the uniforms to those continuing to study. This is but one example of many. The Little Community grew and grew—not outward into other places or locations, like many NGOs tend to, but deeper into connection with its own community. Over the course of a decade, the single-facet NGO became a team of multiple interwoven departments supporting local community life and its evolving issues.

The departments emerged from liquid agencies that engaged organizing as "opportunistic, itinerant, and ebb[ing] or flow[ing] in space depending on the latest threats or opportunities."[77] Liquid agency depends on integration within the social fabric. The Little Community could not perceive the shifting circumstances, nor understand what might help address them, without deep and abiding relationships with people in the surrounding villages. Cruz and Sodeke identify liquidity as "normative in many non-Western contexts and anchored in alternative cultural logics,"[78] in part since it depends on non-Western understandings of collectivity and trust.

Yet such African understandings are erased or obscured under conditions of coloniality. As such, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that the fight for decolonial African futures must be an epistemological one.[79] In the context of the NGO we can find this struggle for epistemic justice staged between the liquid agencies employed by Tanzanian staff members and the solid solutions imposed by Western donors and leaders who often find liquid action unintelligible or nonsensical.

If liquid agency is enabled by a depth and intimacy of relation, then epistemological conflicts between Tanzanian staff and Western donors reveal a gap in intimate understanding, a context in which collectivity is elided by coloniality. Although Tanzanians and Westerners are intimately connected in the NGO in the way Lisa Lowe understands intimacy,[80] Western subjects do not share in the ways of knowing that would enable them to support liquid agency or organizing. That is, *The Center Cannot Hold* argues that systems of whiteness and coloniality produce Western subjects that inherently contribute to epistemic injustice by erasing African epistemologies and attendant liquid agencies unless they commit to a never-ending process of haunted reflexivity. As such, part I of the book details the ways that Western subjects are based in the foreclosure of their own coloniality, and part II then explores the problems this causes for Tanzanian staff at the NGO. To understand both how Western subjectivities become produced in these problematic ways and how they then are (un)able to relate to Tanzanian epistemologies, I offer a perspective attuned to relational politics.

Relationality against Man

I use the lens of *relationality* to lend definition to the political contours of being and becoming, but this is not the primary usage of the term in rhetoric. In examining how ontologies are not fixed, but rather brought into being through intimacy with objects, forces, and subjects, many rhetoricians tend to focus on the agency this view provides to things otherwise considered inanimate, nonhuman animals, and even the dead.[81] Decentering human agency can have important ramifications for perceptions of time, environmental justice, and economic circulation, providing alternatives to Western epistemological strongholds such as linearity, human supremacy, and capitalism.[82] Yet there is another implication to the relational constitution of ontologies, one that I find to be more important. If ontologies are constructed through relations with objects, forces, and subjects, then social and cultural forces impact the process of that construction. As I have argued elsewhere, it is imperative that rhetoricians attend to the *politics* of relationality if we want to decolonize theory and criticism.[83]

Decentering human agency only decolonizes understanding when it is explicitly decentering white, Western, heteronormative human agency. Without an approach to relationality that interrogates who is meant by "human" to begin with, relational ontologies serve only to reinforce the equation of human with Man, even as he is displaced as the focal point of analysis. I thereby draw my understanding of relationality from Women of Color feminist scholars and those who expand on their work. Particularly, I take up Aimee Carrillo Rowe's concept of *politics of relation*. Carrillo Rowe describes placing a politics of relation as the "aim to render palpable the political conditions and effects of our belonging to gesture toward deep reflection about the selves we are creating as a function of where we place our bodies, and with whom we build our affective ties."[84] Here subjectivity occupies analytic attention as the contact zone where myriad relational processes conjoin and disperse. This book thus conceptualizes subjects as products of relationality in order to analyze how political dynamics simultaneously undergird US subjectivities, assisting them with fantasies of coherence, and form cracks and crevices in these subjectivities, pulling them apart.

The Center Cannot Hold takes an expansive view of relationality, one that examines how these flows of power that momentarily cohere in subjects also produce the tensions that will eventually tear apart the Little Community as well. Relationality emphasizes that there is something to be gained in figuring the intercultural contact zone as center by interrogating the processes

through which Tanzanian and Western subjects are produced in relation to each other.[85] Part II of the book thus examines the resultant tensions when Western donors, produced in and through neocolonial logics, attempt to emplace structures that conflict with Tanzanian needs and desires for their own community. Eventually these structures give way under the pressure of relational tensions. The center cannot hold; the NGO falls apart.

Unbinding the Future

When things fall apart, the strictures that coloniality places on possibility are loosened and futures that once seemed impossible enter the realm of potentiality. Yet, to be actualized, these futures must be fought for and built. Enabling decolonial futures is laborious. When things fall apart, the real work begins.

The Center Cannot Hold traces how the dissolution of coherent US subjects and the Little Community itself opens decolonial possibility, particularly through enactments of haunted reflexivity and liquid agency. I conclude with the invocation of decolonial dreamwork—the act of imagining impossible futures in order to bring them into being—as the work that continues in the aftermath.

Decolonial dreamwork is made possible by liquid agency and haunted reflexivity. On the one hand, the act of imagining beyond the limits that coloniality inscribes on possibility is a liquid act of epistemic freedom, of thinking in ways that are delinked from coloniality.[86] On the other hand, "(Im)possible futures where liberation is achieved require a reckoning with contemporary coloniality."[87] Decolonial dreamwork cannot be activated without first engaging in haunted reflexivity's continual attempts to engage one's own complicity in racial-colonial histories and relations.

The limits of our imaginations circumscribe what our futures have the potential to hold. Particularly in the context of Western NGO aid to Tanzania, "it takes the unthinkable to create a world where aid serves justice in Africa rather than Western capitalistic interests,"[88] as African life has long been posited by the West as antithetical to development. Decolonial dreamwork is only possible in the liminal space where things begin to fall apart—at the edges, where the system begins to unravel and new potentialities are revealed. But it takes the work of dreaming to seize hold of such potentialities and put the groundwork in place for them to flourish into actualities. I conclude with decolonial dreamwork, then, because decolonizing NGO aid in Tanzania ultimately requires the creation and amplification of Tanzanian visions of impossible

developmental futures, fluid imaginings that are unintelligible within coloniality. Decolonial dreamwork makes the impossible possible.

Decolonial dreamwork emerges when structures are faced with their own contradictions and, as a result, weaken or fold. Each of the chapters in this book identifies a locus of tension between contradictory neocolonial and decolonial forces that the NGO attempts to contain within its metaphorical walls and discusses how some of the tensions with which the organization grapples are mirrored within Western subjectivities. As parts I and II progress, the walls begin to buckle, collapsing the tenuous center that both the US subject and the organization itself relied on.

Part I begins with chapter 1, "Doctors with(out) Burdens," which traces the difference between two groups of medical students who each spent a week at the Little Community NGO, providing free care and medicine in the surrounding villages. The group of second-year medical students acted in ways that aligned with hegemonic white masculinity and bled into neocolonial relations with the Tanzanian translators and patients, while the group of first-year students instead destabilized masculine medical norms by centering intersubjective care. I argue that medical missions provide an ambivalent space for the perceived crisis of white masculinity in the United States to be ameliorated—either by recentering masculine dominance through neocolonial relations or allowing for masculinity to accede to its fragility through relational understandings of subjectivity. Here I start to place the groundwork for haunted reflexivity.

Chapter 2, "All of Us Phantasmic Saviors," examines how US subjects maintain coherence as volunteers even while recognizing the neocolonialism that underwrites global volunteering itself. Drawing from psychoanalytic theories that pose subjectivity as grounded in the basis of foreclosure, the chapter demonstrates how US volunteers rely on denial and irony to avoid recognizing that they themselves embody the white saviors they love to hate. Both the NGO and the US volunteer subject rely on the contradiction between wanting to do decolonial work and the inability to avoid being a neocolonial subject. The chapter helps us to recognize ways in which haunted reflexivity and its potentials are refused and obscured in favor of the status quo.

Of course, as a researcher I also embody the same tension between decolonial coconspirator and neocolonial savior with which the volunteers struggle. Chapter 3, "Haunted Reflexivity," theorizes a type of reflexivity arising from relational politics that iteratively produces subjects and holds the potential to do so in ways that move toward decolonial justice. The chapter stages an encounter with ghosts, using my personal specter to unearth the colonial

amnesia on which US subjectivities rely. I argue that haunted reflexivity allows Western subjects to be redone by repetitively facing their ghosts, listening and witnessing (to) what they have to say, and refusing the temptation to hold to a fiction of innocence. Witnessing (to) hauntings, to the "other" that demands response, fractures the fiction of Western subjective coherence: the center cannot hold. Part I ends by examining the decolonial potential in the undoing of Western subjectivities.

Part II then examines the implications of Western subjective coloniality on the organization itself, staging encounters between (neo)colonial and decolonial epistemologies. Chapter 4, "Water in the Cracks," demonstrates the ways that Mr. Giles and Western donors attempt to impose solid solutions on community issues that would better be served by emergent processes of liquid organizing. Using interviews with Viongozi Wa Shirika members, I argue that the inability for donors to think outside solid frameworks not only conflicted with Tanzanian liquid organizing approaches but also ironically reinforced the need for them, as liquid organizing becomes increasingly necessary under contexts of epistemic injustice and economic precarity.

Chapter 5, "Fluid (Re)mapping," locates another site of epistemological injustice: epistemologies of land usage in the NGO. When faced with (neo) colonial epistemologies emphasizing proprietary ownership and individual control over land, Tanzanian staff and Mikoda community members responded by engaging in what I term fluid (re)mapping. By discursively and materially redrawing relationships to land that combatted coloniality, Tanzanian actors countered epistemic injustice by centering use value and collectivity in relation to land.

If chapter 3 describes the productive dissolution of the Western subject, chapter 6, "Things Fall Apart," describes the productive dissolution of the NGO. Given the inherent tensions between coloniality and decoloniality in the organization, it was inevitable that things would, eventually, fall apart. The chapter follows the dissolution of the NGO as I knew it to search for the decolonial potential of collapse. I examine how liquid agency enabled the NGO staff to center Tanzanian leadership and desires as the organization fell apart.

The book's conclusion imagines what happens after the fall. When the center dies, what possibilities are born? What futures are enabled after contradictions between the colonial and decolonial have torn (neo)colonial structures and subjectivities apart? After all, falling apart allows things to be put together again, as the fragments can be assembled into something new: fragments of the NGO, of the subjects that worked and volunteered there, and of the community center that exists no more in the form that I witnessed.

The Center Cannot Hold suggests that, for NGO aid, falling apart should be embraced as a beginning that can lead to futures beyond imagining. In the conclusion I introduce the concept of decolonial dreamwork to describe how the liquid agency that emerges from falling apart may be utilized to draw impossible futures into being.

When the center cannot hold, when things fall apart, what is loosed upon the world?

It depends on what can be imagined.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 I will use the shortened name, Tanzania, throughout the book. The Tanzanian education system begins with two years of preprimary school, or what is usually translated to kindergarten, and continues into seven years of primary school. At the time I was teaching there, students had to pass a national examination before they could advance to Ordinary Level (O-Level) secondary school. If they completed four years of O-Level education and passed another round of national exams, students would then move on to Advanced Level (A-Level) secondary school for two years.

2 Here I am drawing from Gumbs, *M Archive*, xi.

3 As Cruz, "Introduction," 102, puts it, "To think that African contexts can teach us [in the West] anything is provocative on many levels."

4 Little Community and Mikoda are pseudonyms to protect anonymity, as are all the names in this book that are related to the NGO and its operations.

5 Madison, "The Labor of Reflexivity."

6 Eshun, "Further Considerations," 291. Although Eshun is describing the power of the corporate futures industry to subvert the radical imagination, I also believe it is possible to invest decolonial visions of the future with similar power to captivate.

7 Easterly, *The White Man's Burden*; Moyo, *Dead Aid.*

8 As Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 6, puts it, "As the North continues ostensibly to 'aid' the South—as formerly imperialism 'civilized' the New World—the South's crucial assistance to the North in keeping up its resource-hungry lifestyle is forever foreclosed." Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 22, similarly notes that "the West gives to others only insofar as it is forgotten what the West has already taken in its very *capacity* to give in the first place." See also Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; and Timberg and Halperin, *Tinderbox.*

9 Bell, "'A Delicious Way'"; Hanchey, "Agency beyond Agents."

10 Richey and Ponte, *Brand Aid*; Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership*; Ferguson, *Global Shadows.*

11 Beck, *How Development Projects Persist*, 14.

12 Biruk, *Cooking Data*; Smith, *Bewitching Development*; Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*; Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*.

13 For critiques of the lack of scholarship attendant to race in anthropology, see Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre, "Introduction"; Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology"; Harrison, "Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation," 3, 9; D'Amico-Samuels, "Undoing Fieldwork," 124; Hale, "Introduction," 20; Pierre, "Activist Groundings," 115–35. For an excellent examination of how racialization is tied to histories of colonialism, see Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Alexander Weheliye's work also speaks to these connected processes; see, for example, Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*.

14 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*; Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*.

15 Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*; Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology"; Ritchie, "An Autoethnography."

16 Kleinman and Fitz-Henry, "The Experiential Basis of Subjectivity," 52.

17 Biehl, Good, and Arthur Kleinman, "Introduction," 13.

18 Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre, "Introduction," 66, describe how "mainstream anthropology continues to steer clear of analysis that centers race and processes of racialization" but also note that even those studies that do focus on processes of racialization fail to link to broader global structures of white supremacy. They advocate that anthropologists "must therefore situate the inter-connected local and global histories of race and racialization in relation to global and local forms of white supremacy."

19 Cole, "White-Savior Industrial Complex"; Hanchey, "Constructing 'American Exceptionalism.'" Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7, defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lives out across the globe today."

20 Stoler, "Introduction," 7.

21 Stoler, "Preface," x.

22 Gilliam, "Militarism and Accumulation," 183.

23 Stoler, "Introduction," 29.

24 Dichter, *Despite Good Intentions*; Hanchey, "Reworking Resistance," 285.

25 Dempsey, "NGOs, Communicative Labor"; Dempsey, "Negotiating Accountability."

26 Beck, *How Development Projects Persist*, 20, 23. Similarly, Smith, *Bewitching Development*, 10, sees the concept of development itself as necessarily encapsulating a tension between the universal ideal and particular reality, thus "creat[ing] all kinds of paradoxes" in aid work.

27 Hanchey, "Reworking Resistance."

28 As Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 94, puts it, "If we are not exterior to the problem under investigation, we too are the problem under investigation."

29 Here I draw my understanding of subjectivity from Judith Butler's and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on Lacanian theories that consider subjects as inherently based in foreclosures. Unlike Jacques Lacan, I read these foreclosures as political. That is, I see subjects as unable to recognize the politics of their own construction without iterative reflexivity leading to subjective transformation.

30 Saks, *The Center Cannot Hold*.

31 As James Baldwin writes in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, "Someone once said to me that people in general cannot bear very much reality. He meant by this that they prefer fantasy to a truthful re-creation of their experience" (69). As Baldwin further explains, the reality that white people in the United States cannot bear to examine is their own violence against Black and Indigenous peoples, instead projecting their own violence onto Blackness and Indigeneity. In doing so, Baldwin explains, those invested in whiteness and coloniality become "moral monsters" who "have deluded themselves for so long that they really don't think I'm human" (39). Haunted reflexivity seeks to redress this moral monstrosity.

32 For example, Harrison, "Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation," 9, notes that the discipline is "preoccupied with constructions and representations of Otherness."

33 Although many anthropologists maintain a focus on "the other," there has always been a contingent that focuses on the nuance of contact zones; see, for example, Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*. Yet comparatively few have turned their attention primarily to aid workers who are Westerners. For notable exceptions, see Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership*; and Malkki, *The Need to Help*.

34 Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric," 652.

35 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, 3, defines epistemic freedom as "the right to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism"; it is a product of the struggle for epistemic justice, the "liberation of reason itself from coloniality." See also Mignolo "Delinking"; Ngũgĩ, *Globalectics*; Ogone, "Epistemic Injustice"; and Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords*. "Man" is a term that Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being," uses to describe a particular Western colonial-rational ontology of being human that overrepresents itself as if it were equivalent to the human itself. See also Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being"; and Towns, "Black 'Matter' Lives."

36 For an overview of and responses to this dynamic within communication studies, see Asante and Hanchey, "African Communication Studies."

37 Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn," 212, emphasis in the original.

38 Mignolo, "Delinking," 463; Ngũgĩ, *Globalectics*, 8.

39 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 536.

40 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 529, 532, 542.

41 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being."

42 Cruz, "Reimagining Feminist Organizing," 31.

43 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 540.

44 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*. Throughout the book, I use the term *fluid* to refer to the epistemological perspectives that allow for liquid motion, organizing, and action.

45 Gumbs, *Spill*.

46 Harrison, "Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation," 9, questions "whether anthropology can continue to be preoccupied with constructions and representations of Otherness if the discipline is to undergo a thorough process of decolonization," implying that the discipline must be undone, in some ways, to truly decolonize its work. Similarly, Hale, "Introduction," 14, introduces his collection of activist scholarship by arguing that "central to [an] agenda for institutional change . . . is to challenge and unlearn the deeply embedded unearned privileges of social science and humanities research." That is, social sciences and humanities must unlearn their disciplinary norms, must undiscipline, in order to work toward (decolonial) justice. In rhetoric particularly, Wanzer, "Delinking Rhetoric," 648, argues that rhetoricians must grapple with "epistemic coloniality (not merely colonialism as an economic-political system)," which requires undisciplining ourselves of the very logics that undergird rhetorical scholarship.

47 As Behar, "Ethnography and the Book That Was Lost," 15–16, notes, if ethnography "has its origins in the flagrant colonial inequalities from which modernity was born and in the arrogant assumptions that its privileged intellectual class made about who has the right to tell stories about whom" we must necessarily ask, "What can be salvaged from the original vision of ethnography to make it a project of emancipation?" Many anthropologists recognize that the field's colonial legacies often spur an unjust relationship to otherness; see, for example, Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*; Harrison, *Outsider Within*, 7, 44; Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance*; Das and Kleinman, "Introduction"; D'Amico-Samuels, "Undoing Fieldwork," 68; Jones, "Epilogue," 195. In rhetoric, the field's focus on publics and counterpublics has long centered the nation-state, to the exclusion of other understandings of civic life, and even those who extend beyond the nation-state primarily do so to investigate issues of immigration and the politics of citizenship—thus, still locating the nation-state as central to political and civic demands. See, for example, Asen and Brouwer, *Counterpublics and the State*; and Brouwer and Asen, *Public Modalities*. A few notable authors, however, question the centrality of citizenship narratives to the discipline. See, for example, Chávez, "Beyond Inclusion"; Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Chevrette, "Assembling Global (Non) belongings"; Lechuga, "An Anticolonial Future"; and Na'puti, "Archipelagic Rhetoric."

48 Some authors have made moves to center interculturality and/or the West itself in anthropology, and global networks in rhetoric. In anthropology, see Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership*; Malkki, *The Need to Help*; Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*; and Gilliam, "Militarism and Accumulation," 170. For rhetoric, see Brouwer and Paulesc, "Counterpublic Theory," 83–86; Colpean and Dingo, "Beyond Drive-By Race Scholarship"; and Na'puti, "Speaking of Indigeneity."

49 Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre, "Introduction," 66, 65.

50 Regarding representations of Africa and Africans, see Bell, "'A Delicious Way'"; Hanchey, "Agency beyond Agents"; Hanchey, "Reframing the Present"; and Steeves, "Commodifying Africa." On white saviorism and American exceptionalism, see Cloud, "'To Veil the Threat of Terror'"; Kelly, "Neocolonialism and the Global Prison"; Harris and Hanchey, "(De)stabilizing Sexual Violence Discourse"; Bell, "Raising Africa?"; and Schwartz-DuPre, "Portraying the Political." Regarding the investigation of intersectional complexities, see Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Chevrette, "Assembling Global (Non)belongings"; Corrigan, *Prison Power*; Mack and Na'puti, "'Our Bodies are Not Terra Nullius'"; McCann, *The Mark of Criminality*; Hoerl, *The Bad Sixties*; and Kelly, *Food Television and Otherness*.

51 For exceptions, see Cram, *Violent Inheritance*; de Onís, *Energy Islands*; Lechuga, "An Anticolonial Future"; Na'puti, "Archipelagic Rhetoric"; Na'puti, "From Guåhan and Back"; and Wanzer-Serrano, *The New York Young Lords*.

52 See, for example, Cloud, *We Are the Union*; McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*; Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*; and Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism*.

53 As Chávez, "Beyond Inclusion," 163, argued on the centennial anniversary of the foremost journal in the field, "From traditional studies of public address, to an array of social movement studies, to analyses of democratic deliberation and the public sphere, Rhetoric scholars are concerned almost exclusively with citizen discourses, mostly from white men in *public*" (emphasis in the original).

54 Beck, *How Development Projects Persist*, 4.

55 Na'puti, "Speaking of Indigeneity," 496.

56 Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology," 538.

57 Hanchey, "Toward a Relational Politics of Representation," 265.

58 Hanchey, "Toward a Relational Politics of Representation," 266, referencing Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being."

59 Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology," 539, write that "the notion of engaging in fieldwork is often approached by activist anthropologists in a gender-neutral way, one that still assumes an unencumbered male subject with racial privilege." And as Bourgois, "Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography," 115, candidly puts it, "We have chosen to study the wretched of the earth."

60 Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*; see also Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 192.

61 See, for example, Collins, *All Tomorrow's Cultures*, 115, who notes, "Reviving a more activist anthropology . . . means returning to the image of an anthropology that can change the world"; and Philippe Bourgois, "Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography," 115: "Although as uninvited outsiders it might be naïve and arrogant for us to think we have anything definitive to offer, we can still recognize the ethical challenge. Why do we avoid it?" More difficult to parse, perhaps, is the challenge issued by in Goldstein, "Laying the Body on the Line," 839: "Like those we study, activist anthropology requires us to lay our bodies on the line." Goldstein calls the act of living by this requirement "a fundamentally different way of being physically in the world." Although in some ways this is laudable, Goldstein frames the bodily vulnerability of activism as "fundamentally different" than that of normal circumstances, and as a *choice* that the researcher has—whether or not to lay his

body on the line (gendering intended). As Berry et al., in "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology," and other Women of Color anthropologists have intimately related, their bodies are never not "on the line" in fieldwork or at home. For Women of Color, laying their bodies on the line is neither a choice, nor is it a "different way of being" confined to fieldwork. In short, comments such as these reveal how the assumed researcher in activist work often lines up with the expectations of Man.

62 Asante, "'Queerly Ambivalent.'"

63 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 529; Gumbs, *Spill*.

64 As Pindi, "Promoting African Knowledge," 332–33, explains, using the context of feminist theory,

> In the case of Africa in particular, the problem of feminist theorization is not only white, but also Western. In fact, an African critique of Western feminism cannot solely be limited to white feminism. . . . For instance, whereas Black feminist frameworks such as BFT [Black Feminist Thought] can speak to the lived experiences of African women as Black women of African descent, such frameworks, which stand as "Western" vis-à-vis African feminisms and their usage, must ultimately be revised within the context of African culture. Failing to do so can result in problematic Western-centric interpretations and representations of African realities. Ultimately, this calls attention to how the historical legacy of Western/white perspectives has played a role in the erasure of African perspectives.

Pindi and other African scholars helped me to understand that by importing a concept such as "fugitivity" into an African space without retheorization, I was participating in the erasure of African perspectives on their own contexts and resistance.

65 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, 3, argues that coloniality "reduced some human beings to a sub-human category with no knowledge." If Western epistemologies are based on rendering Africa as a site devoid of knowledge, per Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 2–3, then such epistemological structures make it inherently impossible to recognize African knowledge as such. This leads Atieno-Odhiambo, "Democracy and the Emergent Present," 31, to wonder, "Need African epistemes be intelligible to the West?"

66 See, for example, Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership*.

67 Asante, "Glocalized Whiteness"; Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*.

68 Aminzade, "Dialectic of Nation-Building," 336.

69 Shivji, Yahya-Othman, and Kamata, *Development as Rebellion*, 1:250.

70 "Non-racialism" is the way that the authors of the biography of Julius Nyerere describe Nyerere's refusal to make racial difference the basis for policy, even when it may have been used to redress historical inequities. The three-volume set, though following Nyerere's life, also offers an intimate and powerful overview of Tanzanian politics from late colonization to Nyerere's death in 1999; see Shivji, Yahya-Othman, and Kamata, *Development as Rebellion*.

71 For more information, see Shivji, Yahya-Othman, and Kamata, *Development as Rebellion*, vol. 3.
72 Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology," 560, 539.
73 Berry et al., "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology"; Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia."
74 Corrigan, "Decolonizing Philosophy," 166.
75 Puri, "Finding the Field," 38.
76 Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*, 12–13, recognizes the ambivalence of interdisciplinarity but also its potential to build liberatory futures. Although "the logics and methods of interdisciplinarity do not guarantee, nor do they inherently express, liberatory or radically transformative knowledges . . . interdisciplinary knowledge—that is, knowledge that transforms the disciplines while creating other forms of knowledge—might still be fashioned into a weapon directed against the [corporate] investment in interdisciplinarity as a strategy of control," widening our possible futures.
77 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 536.
78 Cruz and Sodeke, "Debunking Eurocentrism," 531.
79 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*.
80 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.
81 Davis and Baliff, "Extrahuman Rhetorical Relations."
82 Barnett and DeLuca, "Conditions That Form Us," Keeling, "Of Turning and Tropes"; Gordon, Lind, and Kutnicki, "A Rhetorical Bestiary"; May, "The Orator-Machine."
83 Hanchey, "Toward a Relational Politics of Representation."
84 Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*.
85 Here I draw from the work of Natalia Molina and Lisa Lowe, both of whom argue that processes of coloniality and racialization can only be understood through relating a variety of historical groups and formations; see Molina, *How Race Is Made*; and Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.
86 As Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, 80, argues, "Epistemic freedom has the potential to create new political consciousness and new economic thought necessary for creating African futures."
87 Hanchey, "Reframing the Present," 322.
88 Hanchey, "Reframing the Present," 322.

CHAPTER ONE. DOCTORS WITH(OUT) BURDENS

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1 Johnson, "The Art of Masculine Victimhood"; Johnson, "Walter White(ness) Lashes Out"; Kelly, "The Man-pocalypse"; Kelly, "The Wounded Man"; King, "It Cuts Both Ways."
2 Bandini et al., "Student and Faculty Reflections," 57.